National Park Service photographs

2006 Alaska Park Science Symposium
Park Science in Central Alaska: Crossing Boundaries in a Changing Environment

The 2006 Alaska Park Science Symposium was held at Denali National Park and Preserve, September 12-14, 2006. This 3-day symposium was the second in what is planned to be a biennial series of scientific conferences that are place-based, in that the symposia focus on specific national parks in Alaska, drawing scientists from many disciplines who conduct science in these areas. The focus of the 2006 symposium was on Denali, Wrangell-St. Elias, and Yukon-Charley Rivers, and the adjacent lands and waters of central Alaska and western Yukon.

Approximately 300 people were in attendance, including 200 scientists, managers, and agency staff, and 100 students and local community members. The symposium organizers made concerted efforts to bring together diverse audiences, and to provide opportunities for dialog among scientists, resource managers, decision makers, educators, students, local residents, the Alaska Native community, and the First Nation/Yukon community.

During all three days of the symposium, leading biological, physical, cultural, and social scientists shared their research through presentations or posters. Distance learning technologies were utilized to broadcast live to the Murie Science and Learning Center and to other locations. Cultural program elements facilitated recognition of subsistence lifestyles and traditional ecological knowledge. Symposium opportunities included viewing new documentary films about the focus parks and meeting authors of new books. Workshops, special planning groups, training sessions, and field trips were offered immediately before and after the symposium.

Summary papers from the symposium will be peer reviewed and published. The next symposium will be held in 2008.

2006 Alaska Region Science Strategy

The National Park Service - Alaska Region recently released a multi-disciplinary science strategy designed to meet the intention of the 1998 National Parks Omnibus Management Act for implementing proactive scientific investigations. It is intended to support planning for resource management challenges over the next 10 to 50 years. The strategy identifies major challenges we face in Alaska, in terms of science, information needs and organizational structure.

The strategy's overarching vision and desired end is to support an adaptive management approach to identify the sustainable balance between preservation and park use. The way to achieve the vision is shaped by three strategy objectives:

1) increase the amount and quality of scientific research in parks,
2) enhance interdisciplinary data integration, and
3) expand the use of science in decision-making.

The third section of the strategy, the implementation plan, offers suggestions to align existing NPS assets to achieve these goals. The plan provides guidance that is not contingent upon new funding sources, but rather focuses on existing sources.

The strategy was developed cooperatively with the US Environmental Protection Agency and with support from the National Park Foundation. A copy of the Science Strategy can be found at: **www.nps.gov/alaska/strategy.pdf**